

Becoming a News Reporter: A Case Study in Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) is an excellent way for students to practice and improve their English, develop critical thinking, and engage in meaningful, relevant learning within their local context.

In this webinar, we will:

- consider how to design exciting PBL experiences that will sharpen students' English language and critical thinking skills
- explore a project in which English students created television-style newscasts about issues in their community
- think about how to overcome the challenges teachers often face with PBL



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



Jeremy Beal



Jeremy is a curriculum designer and English language teacher with over a decade of experience working in the U.S. and abroad. He began his career in language education in Indonesia, where he first realized his passion for language and culture. He later returned to Indonesia as a U.S. Department of State English Language Fellow, teaching for three years at Universitas Sam Ratulangi in the city of Manado.

In addition to teaching overseas, Jeremy has taught English classes at several schools in southern California. He holds a master's degree in TESOL from Biola University.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE





Becoming a News Reporter: A Case Study in Project- Based Learning



© 2022 by Jeremy Beal. *Becoming a News Reporter: A Case Study in Project-Based Learning* for the American English Live Teacher Professional Development Series, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. government and administered by FHI 360. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License, except where noted. To view a copy of the license, visit: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Session overview

Definition of Project-Based Learning

Case Study of Project-Based Learning

Setting Up a Class Project

Adapting Project Ideas to Your Students

What is Project-Based Learning?



- Students learn by working on an extended project
- Learning by doing
- Learning as you go

A project is like building a house

- Collaborative
- Extended
- Experiential
- Uses different skills
- Relevant
- Public



Examples of projects

Conduct a survey,
then analyze and
present results



Produce a school
magazine or
newspaper



Create a website
about local culture
for foreign visitors

Tell us about your experience!



What is a project you've used with your students? Type it in the chat!

Example: "I had my high school students create a tourist brochure about our town."

What are some benefits of Project-Based Learning?

- Practical: Learn English for a purpose
- Engaging and rewarding for students
- Relevant to students' lives
- Can develop critical thinking skills
- Integrates English skills in an authentic way

Session overview

Definition of Project-Based Learning



Case Study of Project-Based Learning

Setting Up a Class Project

Adapting Project Ideas to Your Students

News report project: My teaching context

- Indonesian public university
- Undergraduate English majors
- 4th semester of 4-course integrated speaking/listening sequence
- Located in major city of 425,000 people



Your teaching context

Tell us about your teaching context.



- Age of students
- Proficiency level
- Big city or small town?

Share your response in the chat!

Example: “High school,
beginners, small town”



Project description

- Create TV-style news report about a problem in the community
 - Discuss background, causes, and effects of the problem
-
- Groups of 3
 - 4-5 minutes long



Project timeline

6 weeks; two 50-minute classes per week

Week 1	Introduce the project Form groups and choose topics
Week 2	Begin writing script
Week 3	Submit completed script
Week 4	Return script to students with feedback Practice pronunciation of script
Week 5	Create video
Week 6	Project due Viewing party

Goals and objectives



What is one thing students could gain from this project?

Share your response in the chat.



Project objectives

Students will...

- Explain the background, causes, and effects of a problem in their local community.
- Design an effective news report (attention-grabbing intro, interviews, conclusion, etc.).
- Speaking objectives:
 - Use appropriate grammar and vocabulary
 - Speak with clear pronunciation
 - Speak fluently

Project Setup

Assigning groups

- Language proficiency
- Personality



Choosing topics

- Students choose
- Same topic? Consider a different aspect

Example: Two groups want to report on traffic

Group 1: One-way traffic policy

Group 2: Road hazards

Project Setup

Dividing the workload

- Students decided on roles and divided the work
- Video requirement:
Minimum 1 minute speaking time per student



Why did I do this project?

- Relevant to students
- Required critical thinking
- Expanded their vocabulary
- Lots of speaking practice!



Scaffolding:

Preparing students for the project



In the chat, type a classroom activity that could prepare students for this project.



Example: “In small groups, students brainstorm community problems.”

Scaffolding:

Preparing students for the project

- Class brainstorming: Issues in the local community
- Listening lessons: News videos about community issues
- Vocabulary development
- Feedback on written script
- Pronunciation practice
- Small group discussions about community issues



Challenges

What do you think would be challenging about this project from a teacher's perspective?



**Ask a question about
a challenge of doing
this project.**

Example: “How did you teach the students to edit the videos?”



Overcoming challenges

- Generate interest in the project:
 - Connect it to students' lives
 - Show interesting examples
 - Make it realistic or useful
- Help students work in groups:
 - Provide time to work during class
 - Break project into smaller steps
 - Help students choose roles



Session overview

Definition of Project-Based Learning

Case Study of Project-Based Learning



Setting Up a Class Project

Adapting Project Ideas to Your Students

Steps to set up a class project



1. Determine learning objectives.
2. Decide on the type of project.
3. Define project parameters.
 - What are the project components?
 - How much do students need to speak or write?
4. Define assessment criteria.
 - Consider using a rubric.

Using a rubric for assessment



How have you used rubrics with your students?

Tips for using rubrics to assess a project:

- Match grading criteria to learning objectives.
- Give both a group and individual grade.
- Give students the rubric at the beginning of the project.

Sample rubric—Part 1

I. Content (group grade)

Scoring: 2=yes 1=somewhat 0=no

Grading criteria	Score	Comments
A. Background—Thoroughly explains background of the problem in the community (i.e., its current state, history, etc.)		
B. Causes—Thoroughly explains causes of the problem.		
C. Effects—Thoroughly explains effects of the problem.		
D. Effective introduction (states the problem immediately and clearly) and conclusion (brief comment, suggestion, or summary).		
E. Effective portrayal of problem—uses interviews, video, narration, etc. to show the problem clearly.		
Total Score (10 points possible):		

Sample rubric—Part 2

II. English proficiency (individual grade)

Scoring: 2.5=Yes; proficient with minimal errors

1.5=Somewhat; some errors interfere with communication

0.5=No; many errors strongly interfere with communication

Grading criteria	Score	Comments
A. Pronunciation—clear and easily understood		
B. Grammar—mostly accurate; some minor errors are acceptable		
C. Vocabulary—uses precise vocabulary that is specific to the topic of the video. Appropriate word choice throughout.		
D. Fluency—spoken at a reasonable speed without unnecessary/awkward pauses. Clearly well-rehearsed.		
If less than 1 min. of speaking time, -5 points:		
Total score (10 points possible):		

Steps to set up a class project



5. Make a timeline.

- Key due dates
- When you plan to give feedback
- Scaffolding activities

6. Evaluate the success of the project.

- Quality of student work
- Student feedback

Sample student survey

1) Strongly agree 2) Somewhat agree 3) Neutral 4) Somewhat disagree 5) Strongly disagree

1. In general, this project improved my English.

2. This project improved my vocabulary.

3. This project improved my spoken grammar.

4. This project improved my pronunciation.

5. This project improved my spoken fluency.

6. I liked this project.

7. This project required: 1) A reasonable amount of work 2) Too much work

8. Please write any comments or suggestions you have about this project.

Session overview

Definition of Project-Based Learning

Case Study of Project-Based Learning

Setting Up a Class Project



Adapting Project Ideas to Your Students

Adapting to different contexts

How could you adapt the news report project to these contexts?

- ❖ Limited technology resources
- ❖ Beginning-level students
- ❖ Large classes



What's one way you could adapt the news report project for a multi-level class?

Adapting project ideas

Limited resources or technology

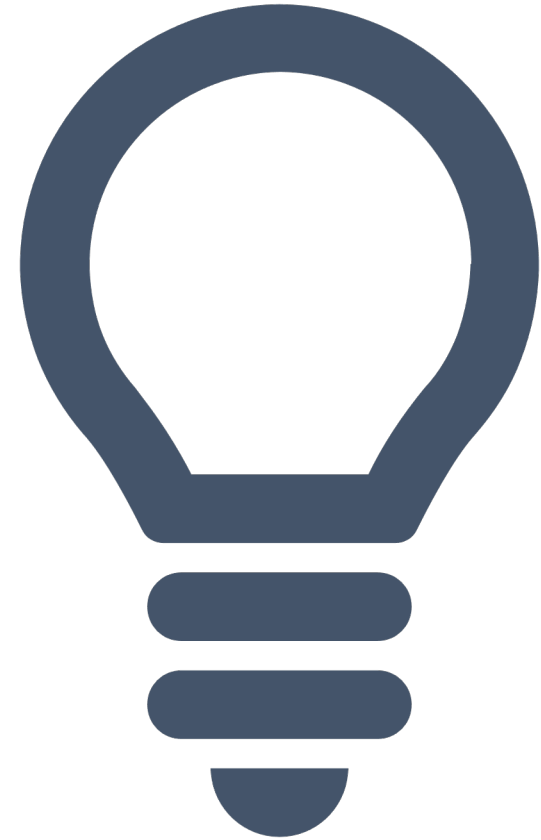
- Change the format

Different proficiency level

- Simplify or change the topic
- Provide a language frame

Irrelevant to teaching context

- Change the topic



Adapting a cultural website project

High-proficiency students

Task:

- Create a website about local culture.
- Include photos, video, and articles.

How could you adapt this for low-proficiency students?

Provide a language frame

- The food in _____ is (sweet/spicy/salty).
- _____ is a popular dish.
- It is made of _____, _____, and _____.

Adapting a survey project

College students with high English proficiency



Your turn!

Task:

- Conduct a survey to learn about students' media use.
- Analyze survey results.
- Give PowerPoint presentation.

How could you adapt this project for elementary school students?

Session highlights

- Benefits of project-based learning
- A case study of project-based learning
- Steps for designing a project
- Ways to adapt projects for different contexts



Final thoughts



What's one idea from today's webinar that you would like to try with your students?

Share your response in the chat.



References

- Buck Institute for Education. (n.d.). *What is PBL?* PBLWorks.
<https://www.pblworks.org/what-is-pbl>
- Yamak, L. A. (2008). Student documentaries: A language learning tool. *English Teaching Forum*, 46(2), 20-27.
<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/english-teaching-forum-2008-volume-46-number-2>
- Yazdanpanah, R. (2019). Exploring and expressing culture through project-based learning. *English Teaching Forum*, 57(3), 2-13.
<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/english-teaching-forum-2019-volume-57-number-3>

Unless otherwise noted, all images in this presentation are the author's own or are "no-attribution required" under the [Pixabay simplified license](#) or the [Unsplash license](#).

Thank you!

Questions or concerns?

Email: americanenglishwebinars@fhi360.org

AE Live Webinar Resource Center <https://openenglishcommunity.org/page/american-english-webinar-series/>

AE website: americanenglish.state.gov

AE YouTube channel: youtube.com/StateAmericanEnglish

AE for Educators Facebook page: facebook.com/AmericanEnglishforEducators

AE Facebook page: facebook.com/AmericanEnglishatState



Reflection Questions

1. How did PBL-related concepts in this webinar relate to what you may have learned during the “Scaffolding Project-Based Instruction: Supporting Student Success” and “Implementing Peer Assessment in Project-Based Learning” sessions earlier in this AE Live series?
2. How did the instructor use a rubric to communicate objectives and performance standards for the news reporter project shown in this webinar? How do you or might you incorporate rubrics into projects for your classes?
3. How might you adapt ideas from any of the project examples shared in this session to suit the needs, levels, and ages of students in your classes?



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

